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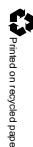


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**Committees and  
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Democratic Floor Leader  
Transportation  
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# 2000 Session Legislative Report

Spring 2000

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

When we came to Olympia in January, we had a list of things we wanted to accomplish. This list was comprised of issues that we believed to be the most important to you — the citizens of the 40<sup>th</sup> District.

- ☒ Approve a Patients' Bill of Rights.
- ☒ Pass legislation to restore the Individual Health Insurance Market.
- ☒ Protect and strengthen public education.
- ☒ Maintain our vital ferry operations while enacting Initiative 695.
- ☒ Pass the Worker Retraining Act.
- ☒ Obtain funding for the rescue tug and the Skagit agricultural buffer pilot project.
- ☒ Pass the memorial asking the Secretary of Transportation to rename part of Highway 20 in honor of Paul Luvera Sr.

We are happy to be able to report that we were successful in each and every one of these goals. This newsletter contains details of all these items inside.

Now that the 2000 session has ended, we are working back in the district. Please feel free to contact us, or our Legislative Assistants, with comments or ideas you may have about this Session Report, or with suggestions for the 2001 session.

Thank you again for allowing us the honor of serving you in the Legislature.

*Dave Quall* *Jeff Morris*

Rep. Dave Quall

Rep. Jeff Morris

## **Education:** **Expanding opportunities and increasing accountability** **Better Schools Fund**

One of the most frequent question we hear from our constituents is "Why don't the lottery dollars go directly to the schools?"

The budget passed by the House this session dedicates all state lottery revenues to a "Better Schools Fund." If enacted in the final budget, this fund will distribute money to every public school, on a per-student basis, every year. This would ensure that lottery revenue is used to improve our schools, the way it was intended to be used.

Local school districts would decide how best to use their Better Schools Fund allocations, but the money must be used to help every child meet the state's demanding new academic standards. School boards could use the fund to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes. They could use it to provide additional classes that would help struggling boys and girls in elementary school learn to read. They could also fund pre-school classes that give young children a head start on reading and writing.

In Bellingham, the fund would create over \$1.26 million of additional funds each year. Mount Vernon schools would receive almost \$700,000 and Sedro-Woolley schools would receive more than \$500,000.

## **School Safety**

Children need a safe place to learn, free from the threat of school violence. We supported measures this year to create an on-going grant program for school safety, ensuring that all local districts get the support they need to make our schools the safest in the country.

Bullying and harassment can lead to violence and make it difficult for kids to learn. This session, we worked on bills that would reduce malicious harassment. We also supported a plan that would let teachers bring character ideals such as "integrity" and "respect" into their lesson plans. Schools throughout the country have adopted similar plans and report fewer disciplinary problems, better attendance and less vandalism.

## **Professional Standards Board**

Our main motivation for creating a professional standards board for educators was to honor the classroom teacher. We wanted to bring the profession of teaching in line with other professions by letting the very best teachers set the standard for their occupation, the same way other professions ensure quality.

What's more, this will help every new teacher get a clear understanding of basic teaching skills and a firm grasp on the subjects they teach. This is a great step forward for teachers, parents and students.

## **Promise Scholarships**

We also worked to increase funding for the Washington Promise Scholarship. The scholarship delivers on the promise that every student should be able to attend college. It provides the top tier of working-class students with the equivalent of full-time, in-state community college tuition, making the dream of a college education real.

## **School Construction**

The House budget provides an additional \$101 million for education construction by moving overflow from the state's rainy day fund into the construction budget. This permanent commitment to school construction could help build a second high school in Mount Vernon and other needed projects.

These additional construction funds could also be used to help fund projects at Western Washington University, Skagit Valley Community College or Whatcom County Community College.



## Health Care: Making coverage accessible and accountable

Since last September, people in 30 of the state's 39 counties have not been able to buy individual health insurance. This means that nearly 225,000 people in the state lost their health coverage, including many who are retired or self-employed.

We worked this session to bring health insurance back to families who lost their coverage when the individual market dried up. We passed a bill that restores coverage to every county in the state by:

- Giving citizens a choice of individual health plans;
- Ensuring that no citizen seeking health insurance will be turned away; and,
- Allowing a range of affordable options for the poor and elderly.

Over 30 percent of health care costs are spent by less than 10 percent of the people insured in the individual market. We created a separate program for these people to lower the cost for average citizens and ensure that no one goes without.

While we are proud of what we've accomplished, the high price of health insurance is still a concern. We'll continue

working to find ways of controlling health care costs. Every citizen deserves high-quality, affordable health care.

### Patient's Bill of Rights

Health care decisions should be made by you and your doctor, not by an accountant working for an out-of-state insurance company. Patients are right to demand basic protections when it comes to the quality of health care they receive. This session, we worked to pass a Patient's Bill of Rights that gives consumers:

- **The Right to Know** — Making the process more open and honest by giving you information about your health plans, and by making clear the plan's grievance process before you buy health coverage.
- **The Right to Privacy** — Protecting you from invasions of privacy, such as insurance companies sharing or selling your medical records for business purposes.
- **The Right to Choose your Doctor** — Choosing your family doctor, and seeing a specialist you trust when needed.
- **The Right to Appeal** — Giving you the ability to appeal to an independent board when you are denied health care.
- **The Right to Justice** — Making insurance companies responsible, and liable, if they cause injury or death by wrongly denying health coverage.

## Protecting your privacy

### Next item up for bid: YOU

Businesses are getting rich by selling **your** personal information — often without your permission. The kind of information being traded goes beyond a simple, anonymous listing in the phone book. Companies are buying and selling your personal profile. Associated with your name is your:

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • <b>Phone number</b>           | • <b>Account numbers and history</b> |
| • <b>Social Security number</b> | • <b>Buying habits</b>               |
| • <b>Address</b>                | • <b>Medical history</b>             |

In closed-door negotiations, some businesses contend that the information is not your property, but theirs — to buy, sell and trade as they please. In some cases, a company will guarantee a profit from your information by selling it to others at a premium cost, or charging you a fee to keep it private.

From sweeping reforms to targeted remedies, we have worked hard to support legislation that puts you back in control of your personal information. We started a substantive debate this year, and we have the opportunity to prevent further abuse of consumer information before it spins further out of control.

This is an issue that is bound to become more important as technology becomes more and more advanced. We will continue to work on protections for your personal privacy next year.

# 40<sup>th</sup> District 2000 Session Report

## Worker Retraining: Finding agreement on program for idled workers

The first major bill approved and signed into law this year breathed new life into the state's successful Timber Retraining Benefits (TRB) program.

Last year, you'll recall, we left Olympia without agreement on a way to continue the program — a situation that left hundreds of out-of-work Washingtonians dangling without the essential assistance that TRB provides. This retraining program is a lifeline for men and women whose careers have been in industries — forest and fisheries, for instance — that are facing hard economic times.

Renamed the Worker Retraining and Tax Equity Act of 2000, this program will also provide retraining benefits for our local people who will be losing their jobs if the



worst happens and the Northwest Food processing plant is closed in Burlington later this year.

And here's the icing: It's a cliché, but it's nevertheless true that this legislation is a real win-win. That's because the unemployment-insurance taxes that fund the TRB program had been scheduled to go up for businesses. We knew there was no reason to let that happen because the system's trust fund is extremely healthy.

The legislation endorsed this session kills the tax hikes and restores hope for Southwest Washington families and other citizens who are doing the best they know how to get back and stay on their feet.

## Bill to honor Paul Luvera Sr. passes House and Senate

This session we passed a bill to officially rename a portion of State Route 20 in honor of the late Paul N. Luvera, Sr., former state senator, community leader, and world-renowned totem pole carver.

The stretch of SR-20 that runs from the Deception Pass/Whidbey Island junction to the south end of Commercial Avenue in Anacortes was completed in August, 1958, due to the efforts of then-Senator Luvera. It will be named the Paul N. Luvera, Sr. Memorial Highway in a ceremony later this year.

## Rep. Morris – district office hours

Rep. Morris will hold office hours in the San Juan Islands the first Wednesday of each month, starting May 3.

**11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

### **Inn at Friday Harbor**

680 Spring Street West  
Friday Harbor

**4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

### **Smugglers' Villa Resort**

North Beach Road  
Eastsound

He will also be holding office hours in Concrete/Marblemount the second Wednesday of each month, beginning May 10, and in Bellingham the third Wednesday of each month, beginning May 17. Please call his district office for an appointment: 360-416-7085.



# 40<sup>th</sup> District 2000 Session Report

## Protecting our farms, streams, and shorelines:

### Shorelines

We supported a measure this year that would bring the state's shoreline rules in line with the salmon-recovery plan we passed last year. The bill would establish a diverse task force to review shoreline planning, regulation and protection. This will ensure that we produce reasoned, practical recommendations for common-sense reforms to the state's shoreline rules.

We're committed to safeguarding the shorelines of Washington, and we'll continue working to find a reasonable compromise on this issue. This is an area that we'll continue working on through the interim and into next year.



### Stream Buffers

This year, we created a pilot program that will help farmers and fish at the same time. The plan helps restore salmon streams by leasing stream banks and planting buffers that keep the water cool and clean for fish.



Most of the effort came from local farmers who provided the vision and leadership for a common-sense solution. Skagit County farmers have gained a reputation for progressively dealing with issues like this. We were happy to back them up and found a great deal of support from our associates in the House.

### Rescue Tug

One oil spill could do tremendous damage to our shorelines and marine life. Last year's grounding of the New Carissa on the Oregon coast showed the tragic consequences of a single disabled ship.

To prevent this tragedy from happening on our shorelines, we supported funds that would pay for an oil tanker rescue tug for the Strait of Juan de Fuca from October to April. This funding would compliment federal money secured by Congressman Norm Dicks and help ensure a safe coastline year-round.



*Rep. Quall and Sen. Spanel on the capitol steps with Jamie Berg and Linda Marrom after the governor signed SB 6731, preserving Lake Whatcom's clean water and natural environment. These two local grassroots activists became concerned that DNR logging could wash hillsides into the lake, fouling drinking water. Armed with persistence and good information, they brought the issue to their lawmakers and worked hard to get it passed. Their leadership shows what every citizen can accomplish.*

## Enacting I-695: Keeping the ferry boats afloat while implementing the people's will

In many parts of the country, the ferry boat is as much a Washington State icon as the apple or Mt. Rainier. But for more than 25 million people a year, ferries aren't just symbols; they're vital links in our statewide transportation system.

But, as the dust settled from Initiative 695, it became apparent that the ferry system will be taking a far larger hit than the rest of the state's highway department—the

measure eliminated \$253 million in operating and capital revenues each biennium. No other transportation mode was affected so drastically by I-695.

Democrats — especially those representing ferry-dependent communities — were tireless advocates in the Legislative process, fighting for immediate funding, as well as a stable, long-term funding plan.

While we did not achieve as much as we would have liked for this year, we were able to secure \$10.1 million for ferries, transferred from the general fund. But we were much more successful at obtaining long-term funding. Beginning in 2001, \$20 million per year from sales tax revenue will be transferred to the Washington State Ferry System for their operating budget. This is the first time sales tax dollars have been used for ferries.



*Rep. Morris addresses a cheering crowd of ferry-riders at a February rally on the Capitol steps. Hundreds of people from all over the northwest corner of Washington came to Olympia seeking funding to "Save Our Ferries!"*

In addition, we created a ferry task force to develop long-range plans for the ferry system, including ways to pay for repairs and upgrades, and methods to possibly privatize portions of the ferry service. We are also awaiting recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Funding in December.

## We can't replace all the lost funding

We did our best to cushion city and county governments from the blow of I-695 by providing the greatest assistance to the greatest local needs. We ensured that *no* city, local health district, or county public health department will lose more than 10 percent of its budget to I-695 MVET losses.

We know that people rely on local governments to make communities safer places to live. That's why we provide for local public safety—with \$35.5 million of public safety assistance for counties and \$66.3 million to help cities with public safety and tax-equalization needs.

Vital local health services will be protected with \$33.2 million—enough to restore fully 90 percent of the MVET losses suffered by local public health services.

But we can't fill all the holes — some services will be trimmed in some areas. However, we will be able to readdress these needs again next year, after the full effects of the losses are known.

## \$30 car tags

When a King County Superior Court judge ruled that I-695 was unconstitutional, the state naturally appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. But rather than wait for the Supreme Court to make their ruling, we passed legislation assuring that the hated Motor Vehicle Excise Tax will not be put back on your cars, trucks, vans, or motor homes.

Both houses of the Legislature passed a bill requiring the \$30 price remain in place, no matter what the court may decide about the constitutionality of I-695.